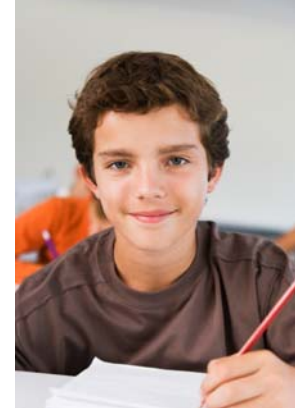


Audience Insights

Communicating to Tweens (Aged 9-12)



Regardless of the exact age definition, most agree the threshold of a "child" becoming a "Tween" is by the American fifth grade (approximately ten years old), when they reject more childlike images and associations and aspire to be more like a teen.¹

Insights into Tweens

1. Tweens are perpetually changing; discovering and learning new things about themselves and the world every day.²
2. Nearly half (46%) of U.S. Tweens (aged 8-12) have a cell phone. Most get their own cell phone between ages 10 -11.³
3. Tweens are too big for child's play and too small for teenage entertainment; they hover somewhere in between, buying all they can or "guilting" their parents into it.^{4,5}
4. Tweens have more autonomy and decision-making power within the family than previous generations.⁶
5. Tweens and young teens control nearly \$40 billion in purchasing power of their own and influence tens of billions more in family buying decisions.^{7,8,9}
6. The Internet is a major part of the Tween culture and is a daily and routine part of their lives.¹⁰
7. Tweens multitask, dividing their attention between cell phones, TV, the Internet, and music.¹⁰
8. Many Tweens are fashion-conscious, fad-loving, and filled with attitude.¹¹
9. Brands are critically important as they seek to fit in with their peers. Most Tweens rely on their tremendous brand sense as their indicator of fashion acceptance.²

Audience Insights can help you to communicate more effectively with your priority populations in order to influence their behavior. CDC's Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch (SPCB) divides audiences into smaller homogeneous segments with similar needs, preferences, and characteristics and provides CDC programs with audience-specific information, marketing expertise, and communication planning. To develop **Audience Insights**, secondary data is collected and analyzed from CDC-licensed consumer databases, books, articles, and the Internet. **For more information, email SPCBHealthMktg@cdc.gov or contact Lynn Sokler, SPCB, at Lsokler@cdc.gov.**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Office of the Associate Director for Communication
Division of Communication Services
Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch



Tweens at-a-Glance

These composites are for illustrative purposes only.



"I'd be lost without my cell phone. That's how I stay in touch with all of my friends. We send text messages and Tweet all the time. I'm on Facebook and never go a day without checking it."

Raven Baxter (The "Talented" Tween)

Raleigh, North Carolina

Fifth Grade, Age: 11

- ◆ Multi-tasks with media (texts, Tweets, watches TV).
- ◆ Admits she's a "teen wannabee" and does not see herself as a child.
- ◆ Her parents still play an important role in her life.
- ◆ Goes to a summer camp where she's learning about acting and photography.
- ◆ Pays close attention to her weight. Is on the soccer and swim teams.



"I really miss my dad. In the meantime, I'll work hard at school to make him proud. I don't sleep well at night, but my mother doesn't know."

Denzel Moss (The "High Achiever" Tween)

Atlanta, Georgia

Sixth Grade, Age: 12

- ◆ His father is in the U.S. Army in Afghanistan, and stays in touch with him online via Skype.
- ◆ Gets excellent grades in school and has a strong support group of friends and teachers.
- ◆ Helps out at home by watching his younger sister after school.
- ◆ Wants to go to basketball summer camp, but is concerned his asthma will be a challenge.



"I've never lived in Mexico, but when people meet me they assume that's where I'm from. I'm proud I'm an American."

Maria Francis Davila (The "First Generation Mexican American" Tween)

San Antonio, Texas

Fourth Grade, Age: 10

- ◆ Her parents emigrated from Mexico; she was born five years after they arrived in the U.S.
- ◆ Learned to speak English in school, but speaks Spanish with her family at home.
- ◆ Enjoys TV and watches Hannah Montana and Disney programs.
- ◆ Fits in well with her American friends and introduces them to aspects of her Mexican American culture.
- ◆ Is in good health, but worries about her mother's type II diabetes.

Targeted Health Communication

Knowing the [habits and preferences](#) of Tweens can help you plan health communication and marketing efforts for this audience.

- ▶ A Tween-friendly website can be a powerful recruiting tool for Tweens. It can help to reinforce messages through the use of exciting colors, graphics, games, music, and video clips.¹²
- ▶ Develop messages that appeal to Tweens' core psychological needs. Tween girls often are motivated by messages related to beauty, glamour, and the desire to master a particular task. Tween boys typically desire mastery and are motivated by messages expressing power, bravery, and conquests of "good vs. evil". Messages must be unique and distinct at each point along the Tween age spectrum to resonate with them.^{13,14}
- ▶ Communication messages should be different for grade schoolers and middle schoolers. Once Tweens make the jump from elementary school to middle school, their needs, challenges, and influences change dramatically.²
- ▶ Don't overlook traditional communication channels. Although very tech savvy, there has been rapid growth in Tween television programming recently through Cable networks like Disney and others. Nielson reports that TV viewing among Tweens has actually gone up 6% over the last five years.¹⁵
- ▶ Today's Tweens are growing up in a multicultural environment and they expect advertising and visual messaging to reflect that diversity.¹²
- ▶ Use language that is lively, readable, fun, interesting, relevant, age- and gender-appropriate, logical, welcoming, positive, and challenging.¹¹
- ▶ Remember, Tweens want to be Teens but are not quite there so make materials edgy but not over-the-top. Materials need to grab a Tweens interest while remaining relevant to the topic.¹³

The Facts: Teen vs. Tween

Teens and Tweens are not alike. While some characteristics and trends hold true for both age segments, most do not, and they should be treated as distinct audiences.⁷

Tweens	Teens
Tweens still share many traits with their younger siblings.	Teens begin to develop the characteristics and behaviors of adulthood
Safety is a concern for Tweens as they may not be as prepared to deal with some of the issues teens must face like drug and alcohol use.	N/A
Both Teens and Tweens like music, but their tastes differ significantly, despite the fact that Tweens like to emulate their older siblings.	

Tween Lifestyle

- ▶ Most Tweens appear to be happy, confident, and optimistic about their future.¹⁶
- ▶ Parents face a constant struggle with Tweens and their desire for independence versus the need for boundaries.⁹
- ▶ Tween activities include going to movies, spending time with friends and family, playing sports and video games, and watching TV.¹⁷
- ▶ There are gender differences in leisure activities that need to be taken into account. Tween girls often enjoy more alone time doing artistic activities such as reading books, while the majority of Tween boys like to play sports.¹⁶
- ▶ Nearly all Tweens say it is very or somewhat important to get good grades in school. They value intelligence and seek out activities that challenge them to think and interact with others.
- ▶ Parents and other primary care givers still top the list as Tween role models, surpassing grandparents, teachers, performers, and siblings. Friends also play a key role in the lives of Tweens and how they see themselves.¹⁸
- ▶ Tweens and their parents/caregiver are more of a team. They often have similar tastes in products and services, ranging from apparel to music. They consult each other for advice on many topics, including potential purchases.⁷

Tween Media Habits

► Eighty-one percent of Tweens prefer person-to-person contact versus text messaging, but steadily go “digital” in their social lives as they grow into their teens.¹⁹

► Although 80 percent of Tweens say they “love” TV, if they had to choose only one communication medium, most would select the Internet. Technology is an integral part of their lives.⁷

► Fifty percent of Tweens and young teens listen to music, read, or use a computer while watching television.²⁰

► Popular print and television brands for Tweens include Sports Illustrated for Kids, Teen People, Disney, and Nickelodeon.²¹

► Tweens typically use a computer and access the internet while being observed by their parents.¹⁰

► Tweens socialize online through email, instant messaging (IM) or blogs.¹⁶

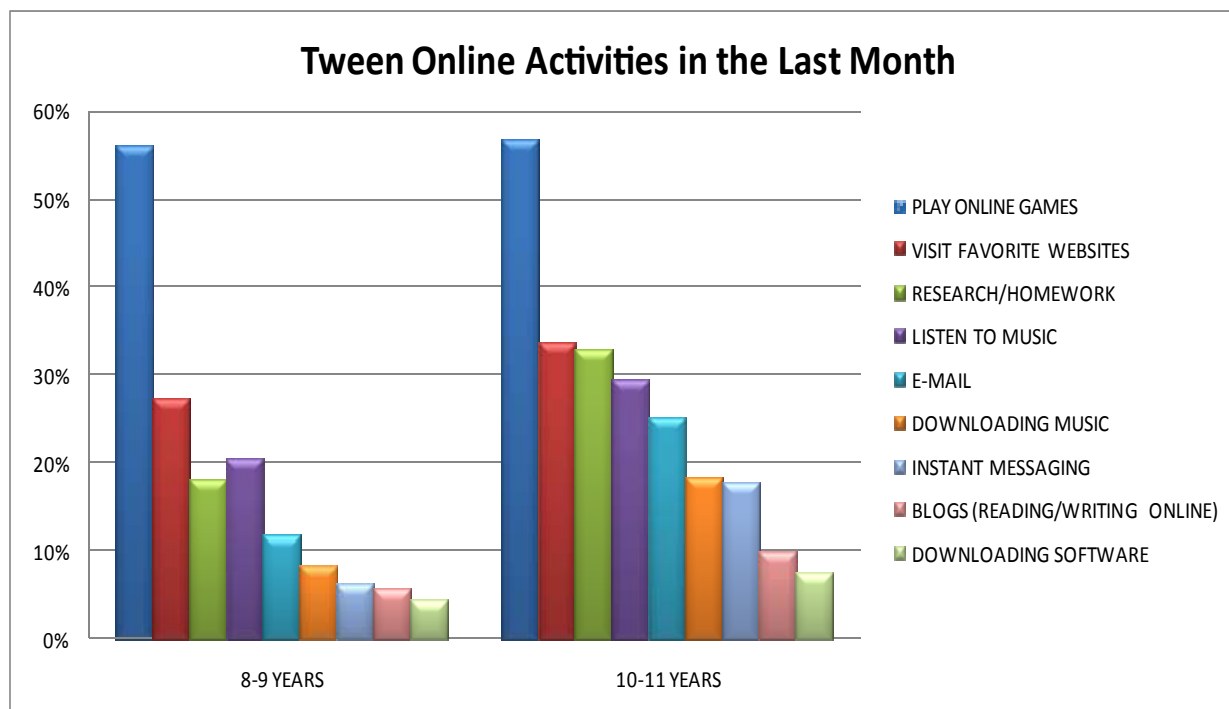
► Internet access varies by race/ethnicity. In 2003, home Internet access by youth (ages 6-12) was: Caucasian (55%), Hispanic (36%), African American (31%).²²

► Nine out of ten Tweens use online computer services. Spending the majority of the time playing online games, doing research for homework and listening to or downloading music.¹⁶

► Tweens spend less time surfing the Internet than their teen counterparts:

- ◆ Forty-eight percent of Tweens said they spend less than one hour per day online, while over 80% of Teens reported spending more than an hour per day online.
- ◆ When they are online, 70% of Tweens use the Internet for gaming.

► Online, Tweens visit Web sites of their favorite cable networks, including Disney, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network.¹⁶



SOURCE: Experian Information Solutions, Inc. Simmons Kids Fall 2007 Full Years Study (Spring 2008)¹⁷

Tween Cell Phone Use

- ▶ Fifty-five percent of Tweens who own a cell phone send text messages and 21% download ringtones.²³
- ▶ Tweens access TV, music, and the Internet on their cell phones.⁵
- ▶ Some 5% of Tweens access the Internet over the phone each month.⁵
- ▶ Forty-one percent of Tween mobile Internet users do so while commuting or traveling e.g. (to school).⁵
- ▶ Approximately six out of ten Tweens that use their cell phones for entertainment, do so at home.⁵

How parents influence Tween cell phone:

- ▶ Safety is the top reason why parents want Tweens to have a cell phone – in case of an emergency or problem.³
 - ♦ Ninety-two percent of parents restrict how Tweens use their phone.³ For example, 68 percent prohibit downloads (games, ringtones, etc.) that incur charges.³



Tweens and Social Media

- ▶ A large number of Tweens use social media:²⁴
 - ♦ 72% have a profile on at least one social networking site;
 - ♦ 54% have a MySpace profile;
 - ♦ 35% have a Facebook profile;
 - ♦ 45% have some other social networking profile;
 - ♦ 64% visit social networking sites at least once per day;
 - ♦ 34% spend four or more hours per week on social networking sites.
- ▶ Tweens report less involvement with blogs. Less than one in ten said they read blogs frequently; about three in ten said they read blogs occasionally, four in ten said rarely, and two in ten said they never read blogs.²⁵

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Internet: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing/resources.htm#insights>

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